

HIGHLIGHTS NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS COMMITTEE (NCRC) MEETING
Orlando, Florida
July 25-27, 2006

Present:

Joyce Swartzendruber, Chair, Bangor, ME; Sharyn Alvarez, FWPM, Beltsville, MD; Mary Baumann, District Conservationist, Ashley, ND; Kim Bradford, Sociologist, Greensboro, NC; Jason Bradshaw, Soil Conservationist, Cedar City, UT; Stephen Cashman, Soil Conservationist, Fort Kent, ME; Coleen Churchill, Assistant, Bangor, ME; Thedis Crowe, Resource Conservationist, Choteau, MT; Alice Love, Farm Bill Specialist, Auburn, AL; Cory Lytle, Soil Conservationist, Caliente, NV; Rick Tafoya, RC&D Coordinator, Carroll, IA; Phuc Vu, State Design Engineer, Portland, OR; and Gary Watson, District Conservationist, Hope, AR;

Advisors:

Pamela Boyland, Supervisor, Human Resources Management Division, Washington, DC; Larry Holmes, Director, Outreach Division, Beltsville, MD; Russ Mader, Natural Resources Specialist, Strategic & Performance Planning Division, Washington, DC; Linda Varner-Mount, Director, Civil Rights Division, Beltsville, MD;

Opening

The NCRC met in Orlando Florida July 25–27, 2006 in conjunction with the National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees' Annual Training Conference. Joyce Swartzendruber, Chair welcomed the committee. Joyce provided a brief background on her past roles with NRCS. Joyce hopes to publicize what the NCRC is doing to keep all NRCS employees informed. She expects the NCRC to support the Employee Associations and is pleased to see the APIO and AIANEA jointly working together at this conference while retaining their individual identities.

Human Resources Management Division Report

Pamela Boyland, (via telephone), Supervisor Employment & Classification Team reported for the Human Resources Management Division. Pamela reported on the following:

- John Glover is Acting Director for HRMD, beginning July 24th.
- Tammy Washington has joined HRMD; she will be working with the department getting NRCS connected with the Electronic Personnel File System (e-OPF).
- Electronic Official Personnel File (e-OPF) System - Which allows employees to access their official personnel records on line, will be implemented throughout USDA. To date a few USDA mission areas are scheduled to pilot the e-OPF system starting 3-Qtr 2006; Tammy Washington, Employment & Classification Team, Headquarters Office is currently the NRCS representative working with the USDA Office of Human Capital Management (OHCM). Implementation/pilot date has still not been established for NRCS. More information will be provided. Tammy Washington will also be working on this.
- Al Macey will be moving to Phoenix, Arizona, his last day will be July 28th. This position will be vacant until Pamela receives approval to hire.
- Receiving a lot of questions on background checks on district employees or non-federal employees. If anyone has questions please contact your state's HR specialist, Carol Rowe will be the State HR Specialists contact in headquarters. Carol is also the point of contact for benefits issues.
- National headquarters senior leadership has been working with OPM on the 401 and 457 Series. As soon as a decision is made Pamela will forward the information.

Outreach Division

Larry Holmes, Director, Outreach Division reported on:

- Jackie Roscoe is on detail with Management Services Division until September.
- Fred Reaves is on detail with the Conservation Planning Division.
- Vivian Dixon is helping out with the COOP.
- The Outreach Division has been realigned and is now under the Office of the Chief and will be supervised by Dr. Arun C. Basu, Special Assistant to the Chief.
- Outreach Division has had a person assigned to each region. Willie Pittman is doubling up and covering the West and Central Regions. Linda Oliphant is covering the East.
- The Outreach Division is responsible for carrying out pages 68 and 69 of the Strategic Plan.
- Larry thanked Rick Tafoya for his assistance in placing a scholar.
- Larry will include the Electronic Library in his 2007 budget.
- Outreach Course Modules are completed and ready to be piloted.

Civil Rights Division Report

Linda Varner-Mount, Director, Civil Rights Division reported the following activities in the Civil Rights Division:

- There will be mandatory training for all managers and supervisors in the areas of: reasonable accommodations, harassment, (including sexual harassment), reprisal/retaliation and the EEO complaint process.
- Civil Rights Training will be conducted for Boot Camp Instructors.
- Civil Rights and Program Delivery Training will be conducted for new technical employees through Boot Camp.
- A NEDC course will be offered for Civil Rights and Program Delivery.
- Looking at changing the compliance review process to increase efficiency.
- There will be in-house paper reviews annually of all States.
- Assist States with training on conducting field level compliance reviews.
- Provide feedback to States on Affirmative Employment Plans submitted to the Civil Rights Division.
- Harvesting the RSNOD data from Field Office business tools.
- ADR functions have been realigned to the Civil Rights Division.
- Looking for details in and out of the Civil Rights Division.
- Prevent problems by contacting the Civil Rights Division when: You are contemplating taking an adverse action on an employee that you feel may be controversial but can be perceived by the employee as due to race, religion, color, sex, national origin, age, disability, and/or marital status; You are about to take action on an employee who has been out of work or not performing well due to having a disability or medical issues; If an employee requests a reasonable accommodation to help him/her perform the essential functions of the job which you are thinking about denying; An employee complains about sexual harassment or unwelcome behavior by another employee; or if an employee complains about not being treated equally, whether or not you believe this is actually the case.

Strategic & Performance Planning Division

Russ Mader, Management Analyst, Strategic & Performance Planning Division reported on:

- The Strategic Performance Plan is the future of the agency.
- Working with a group on performance elements for 2007.

- Add column to PRS data checker to extract RSNOD data. Prefer DC level access. Asking for error or check compiled list.

Action: Russ will follow-up by August 11th on what the available options are.

Issues

Issues and Concerns will be requested after December meeting to review at the Spring meeting.

The Accessibility Issue was discussed. Each of the three Service Center agencies uses a slightly different accessibility guide, and all three agencies conduct their own building assessment on the same building, sometimes coming up with different results. This issue has been discussed at the National Food and Agriculture Council level, and the proposal to have only the “leasing agency” conduct the assessment is endorsed by NCRC. The NCRC further proposes when the lease is signed by the local FAC, that each agency leader also signs an agreement that the building meets federal accessibility requirements. Conflicts at the local FAC level should be elevated to the State FAC.

The Power of Attorney Issue was discussed. Thedis volunteered to draft an issue paper on the need to consolidate the Power of Attorney forms that each Service Center agency uses. This would create efficiencies for the producer and the agencies involved.

NCRC Applicants

Reviewed applications for the three vacancies to the NCRC. Members were chosen for the following vacancies Hispanic/Female and American Indian/Alaska Native/Female. NCRC members will continue to recruit an Asian/Pacific Island female.

2007 Calendar

The NCRC recommended the following calendar for 2007:

- December 2006
Indianapolis, Indiana (in conjunction with NOPBNRCSE meeting)
Awards nominations and Roles and Responsibility training
Meeting coordinator: Gary Watson
- Spring 2007
Washington DC. (Issues Meeting)
Meeting Coordinator: Kim Bradford
- Summer 2007
Maine. (Business Planning meeting for 2008)
Meeting Coordinator: Steve Cashman

Discussed hosting EEO Roles and Responsibilities training for the NCRC as well as State CRAC members. Joyce will check with USDA Graduate School to see if they can provide training at the December NCRC meeting.

Business Plan

The 2006 Business Plan was reviewed.

Accomplishment Report

Mary Bauman was complimented and thanked for her work on the NCRC 2005 Accomplishments Report. She volunteered to keep the reported updated and will update the 2006 Accomplishment Report after the Business Plan has been updated.

Awards

Gary Watson reviewed the 2006 Award nominees. Gary will draft a letter to the Chief for Joyce's signature. There was discussion on who is responsible for preparing and presenting the awards. The committee suggested that Joyce work with Dana York to obtain guidance and policy on the awards procedure. The committee recommended that there be consistency on the awards presented. The Committee also suggested adding an article on my.nrcs under the Employee Spot Light on award recipients.

Display

Sharyn Alvarez has updated and been the keeper of the NCRC display for the past three years. This duty will be passed onto Mary Baumann. Sharyn will have the NCRC display up at the AIANEA/APIO Conference, August 11th in Anchorage, Alaska.

my.nrcs

The committee discussed having space on my.nrcs to place NCRC information for all NRCS employees to access. Joyce will find out what the process is for NCRC obtaining space on my.nrcs.

NCRC Awards

Service awards were presented to 2006 outgoing members: Sharyn Alvarez, Hispanic; Thedis Crowe, American Indian/Alaska Native and Barbara Aflague, Asian Pacific Island.

Training.

Training was provided to State CRAC Chairs/Representatives in the following:

- Performance Management – Eloris Speight
- Non Discrimination in Sexual Orientation in Federal Workplace – William Scaggs
- Roles & Responsibilities , ADR, Compliance Review Process, Harassment – Sharyn Alvarez
- Outreach – Jackie Roscoe

State CRAC Chairs/Representatives presented a 10 minute presentation on what their states are doing in Civil Rights.